

Police report 18% reduction in missing person reports in Edinburgh



Missing person reports to police in Edinburgh have reduced by almost a fifth thanks to increased efforts with partners to safeguard vulnerable people.

Between January and June 2018, Edinburgh Division saw an 18% reduction in the number of missing person reports they received compared to the same period last year.

Due to close working with NHS Lothian, there has been a 25% reduction in missing person reports being received from both physical and mental health facilities.

NHS staff have, as part of wider ongoing improvements in patient care, made a number of significant changes which have resulted in far fewer patients being reported missing.

There has also been a 17% reduction in young people being reported missing from the care of the City of Edinburgh

Council as a result of ongoing partnership efforts.

May 2018 saw the lowest reports from the City of Edinburgh Council in four years.

Chief Superintendent Gareth Blair, Edinburgh's Divisional Commander, said: "Missing person reports make up a substantial part of modern-day policing and we play a vital role when a person goes missing. Our investigations can, and do, save lives.

"Our local officers have significant collective experience in searching for missing people and work to provide a professional and effective response at all times, which is supported by national specialist resources, such as the Air Unit and the Dog Unit, where necessary.

"We continue to work closely with our partners to improve how we can all work better in this area, which includes looking at the cause of why some people go missing in the first place.

"Going missing can be a traumatic ordeal for an individual, who is usually already at a vulnerable point in their lives, as well as for their family and friends. This reduction means that less people are having to deal with the additional involvement of the police while navigating a difficult period.

"It also means that around 3000 hours of frontline officers' time, and roughly £1 million worth of staff hours, have been spent helping our communities in other ways."

In June 2018, police in Edinburgh teamed up with NHS Lothian to launch a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at preventing people from going missing from the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh's Accident & Emergency department.

To tackle the issue of vulnerable people leaving medical facilities without giving staff proper notification, new leaflets are being provided to people attending A&E advising

of the basic police process if they are reported missing.

The leaflets are already being considered good practice across the UK.

Chief Superintendent Blair continued: "Staff within the City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian have shown great dedication to increasing and strengthening safeguards in order to prevent people within their care having to be reported missing.

"We have made great strides in Edinburgh in recent years, across all public sector agencies, to improve how we approach these complex enquiries.

"In 2017, police in Edinburgh were dealing with over 15% of all missing person reports in Scotland – the highest of any other local authority in the country. So far this year, we've seen an 18% reduction locally compared to a 4.4% rise nationally and I am incredibly grateful to our partners for their support and continued efforts."